

VASSAR COLLEGE OBSERVATORY

Raymond Avenue, Poughkeepsie

In 1865, Matthew Vassar built this observatory for Maria Mitchell on the campus of the college he had recently founded. Astronomer, professor, and crusader for higher education and professional advancement for women, Mitchell was the first woman elected to both the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Philosophical Society. Vassar had the observatory custom-designed for her. It contained the country's third-largest telescope at the time, Mitchell's classroom and laboratory, and rooms that served as home for her and her father. Mitchell's emphasis on high scientific standards and feminist ideals made her a role model for those she taught and those who followed.